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Meese Studies New Data On Waldheim's War Role

Decision on Barring Entry to U.S. Is Weighed

By Howard Kurtz
Washington Post Staff Writer

Attorney General Edwin Meese III said yesterday that he will study a new report of Kurt Waldheim's involvement in a brutal Nazi "pacification" program in Yugoslavia in 1942 before deciding whether the Austrian president should be barred from visiting the United States.

After denying for months that he had anything to do with the Nazi activities that resulted in the massacre of Yugoslav civilians in a mountainous area called Kozara, Waldheim has acknowledged that he did take part in the World War II operation, but only as a "supply officer," according to a report in yesterday's Washington Post. Sources said late yesterday that in August Waldheim's attorneys gave the Justice Department the same information in a written submission.

Meese has been considering for more than six months whether to place Waldheim on a "watch list" of persons to be denied entry to this country because of his alleged Nazi activities.

Asked about the Post story yesterday, Meese told reporters: "These would be additional facts that would be taken into consideration in our review of the whole matter There's been no hurry and no need for hurry because there's no prospect of him coming to this country in the near future,

and we felt it's important to look at all the facts."

Neal Sher, head of the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations, recommended to Meese last April that Waldheim be barred from the United States. Sher and other senior officials briefed Meese on their findings several weeks ago. Meese said last month that he expected to make a decision soon.

Justice Department spokesman Terry Eastland said the decision "is not being delayed for any political reason. The delays are accounted for by the fact that various information keeps coming up. It's like trying to shoot something while it's moving."

Waldheim's spokesman, Gerold Christian, told The Post that Waldheim served with the German army in the Kozara area in the spring and summer of 1942 but that he was a "supply officer" not engaged in the fighting. Records show that Waldheim was a member of the Nazi general's command staff.

In a 13-page memo Waldheim's son presented to The Post last April, Waldheim denied that he was in the Kozara area during the spring and summer of 1942. But Christian said "additional research" has now showed Waldheim's earlier statement to be incorrect.

Yesterday Christian said, "Mr. Waldheim never admitted he was a war criminal. The facts speak against these charges. We are witnessing a

continuation of the defamation campaign against Mr. Waldheim."

Christian said Waldheim "never was present during combat action He was unfit for the front and never had a rifle to shoot with. Waldheim never took part in any way in actions against [Yugoslav] partisans and Jews."

The Post also quoted former Yugoslav intelligence officials as saying that the Yugoslav and Soviet intelligence services attempted to blackmail Waldheim into becoming a communist agent in 1947 and 1948 by threatening to charge him with war crimes. Christian said again yesterday that Waldheim was unaware of any such attempt.

Last spring, Waldheim admitted for the first time that he had served as an intelligence officer with the German army in the Balkans from 1942 to 1945. For more than four decades, he had maintained that his wartime service ended in 1941.

Nathan Perlmutter, head of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, said yesterday that "Waldheim's continuation in office is a mockery of the Austrian presidency. The man is a revealed liar. He would cut dignity's losses to salvage the fragments left of his reputation by resigning."

In a related development, the World Jewish Congress said yesterday that Waldheim, while serving as Austria's foreign minister during the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, ordered his country's embassy in Prague to turn away Czech citizens seeking asylum.

The group released copies of a diplomatic cable it said bore Waldheim's initials, directing the embassy to close its doors to Czechs seeking refuge. It said the ambassador in Prague ignored the directive and issued more than 5,000 visas a day to fleeing Czechs.